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ABSTRACT

The 1993-94 school year was the first year of the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) of the Austin (Texas) Independent School District. The ALP used a grant from the Texas Education Agency to train elementary educators in the methods of a short-term reading intervention program based on the Reading Recovery/Whole Language theory. A group of 367 first-grade students who were identified as low-achieving was selected to participate in the 4-week program of accelerated instruction on 13 elementary campuses. Across the whole program, students increased their reading skills 0.47 levels (on a 4-point scale) on a 26-item developmental checklist, with the difference between preprogram and postprogram means found to be statistically significant. This checklist was used when no common standard of comparison was available; the lack of a common standard made evaluating program success difficult. Levels of student attendance varied greatly, as did levels of parent involvement. Plans were made for continuation of the program in the 1994-95 school year, with recommendations for improvement centered on establishing a common standard for judging achievement and additional staff training and student retention efforts. (Contains 1 summary table, 5 figures, and 3 references.) (SLD)

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THE ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM: THE FIRST YEAR 1993-94
Executive Summary

Austin Independent School District
Office of Research and Evaluation

Author: Ralph J. Smith

Program Description

The 1993-94 school year was the first year of the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) in AISD. The program was funded by a $223,599 Retention Reduction grant from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The grant was used to train a group of AISD elementary educators in the methods of a short-term reading intervention program based on the Reading Recovery/Whole Language theory. A group of 387 first-grade students (1993-94 school year) who had been identified as low achieving and potentially "at risk" of dropping out in the future were selected to participate in a four-week program of accelerated reading instruction at 13 elementary campuses. All of these campuses were either on AISD's "C" list, TEA's list of schools that had "clearly unacceptable" TAAS results, or both.

The program operates on the principle that, if low-achieving students are offered short-term, intensive, and individualized remediation in an atmosphere which fosters and recognizes personal successes, they are more apt to succeed in their regular classroom environment. The program recognizes that the ability to read and write well is a requisite for success in all other academic areas.

Four major objectives were originally defined for the program:

1. All students who participate in the Accelerating Literacy Program will avoid the need to be retained;
2. Students will have a stronger foundation for second grade, as shown by at least a four-level gain on the diagnostic running record in reading;
3. Parents will become partners in the educational process as shown by their participation in workshops which stress home teaching strategies and their development of homemade materials and learning activities; and
4. A school improvement planner will continue to expand literacy intervention efforts in these schools.

Major Findings

1. Programwide, students increased their reading skills 0.47 levels (based on a four-point scale) on a 28-item developmental checklist. The difference in pre- and postprogram means was found to be statistically significant. However, the psychometric properties of the checklist are unknown. This checklist was used as the primary indicator of progress when it was determined that no other common scale or criteria existed to measure programwide progress. Numerous problems with the running record, intended as an additional measure of reading progress, rendered it ineffective for purposes of program evaluation. (Pages 19-20)

2. Nearly all ALP students were placed in the program based on recommendations made by their regular school year teachers. However, no systematic, common criteria were used on a programwide basis to identify students. As a consequence, a number of students received very high ratings on the preprogram developmental checklist, indicating that some students may have been inappropriately placed in the program. (Page 22)

3. No common set of reading achievement standards are being employed on a systemwide basis. Teachers at different campuses used various proficiency standards to judge their students' progress on running records. Lack of a common standard makes programwide success difficult to evaluate, and makes classroom-to-classroom or campus-to-campus comparisons impractical. (Pages 12, 21)

4. Levels of student attendance varied considerably. Programwide, students were in attendance only 86% of possible classroom hours. Many students who were nominally enrolled in the program (11.5% of total program enrollment) never reported for class; many more either formally withdrew or dropped out without explanation. (Page 16)

5. Levels of parental involvement also varied. The parent training workshops at most schools were poorly attended. Parents were asked to maintain a parent-student reading activity log over the four-week period. Examination of the logs revealed that a number of parents committed themselves to regular reading activities. However, a substantial number of parents did not submit logs, or submitted logs with very few entries. A majority of teachers reported that parents of most of their students did not attend the workshops and did not keep a log of outside reading activities. (Pages 17-19)

Budget Implications

Mandate: External funding agency

Funding/Amount: $223,599 (1993-94)

Funding Source: Division of Accelerated Instruction, Texas Education Agency

Implications: Funds for continued support of the Accelerating Literacy Program in the 1994-95 school year have been procured. As this report goes to print, it is not yet clear what form the program may take. It is anticipated that more elementary educators in AISD will receive ALP training during this school year, and that the program will be replicated as a four-week module during the summer of 1995. Instruction may be extended to both kindergarten and second-grade students in the coming school year.

Recommendations

1. The District should develop or adopt a common standard for measuring progress in reading achievement.
2. Threshold proficiency levels should be defined by the same standards mentioned in the previous recommendation. Eligibility for the program should be determined by a two-part process. Students should first be identified by their regular teachers as potential participants. Then, these students should undergo a more formal diagnostic screening from an ALP-trained teacher before entering the program.
3. All program staff should receive training in evaluation methodology. This instruction will lead to improved and more uniform record keeping, and ultimately, to more valid and reliable evaluation results.
4. An informal, nonbinding "contract" should be developed as a means to improve student attendance and parental involvement.
5. Appointment of a permanent program coordinator similar to the school improvement planner discussed in the proposal to the funding agency would help ensure consistency within the program.

PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS SUMMARY

ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM
1993-94

Program	Rating	Allocation (Cost)	Number of Students Served	Cost Per Student	Average Increase in Reading Level* (Effect)	Cost Per Student to Attain Average Increase in Reading Level (Cost/Effect)
Accelerating Literacy Program	+	$223,599	367	$609	0.47	$1296

* The average gain from pre- to postprogram, as determined by a 26-item developmental checklist, was 0.47 reading levels, based on a 4-point scale where a student's demonstration of a skill was rated as 1 (Not Yet), 2 (Occasionally), 3 (Most of the Time), or 4 (Consistently).

Rating is expressed as contributing to any of the five AISD strategic objectives.

+	Positive, needs to be maintained or expanded
0	Not significant, needs to be improved or modified
-	Negative, needs major modification or replacement
Blank	Unknown

Cost is the expense over the regular District per-student expenditure of about $4,000.

0	No cost or minimal cost
$	Indirect costs and overhead, but no separate budget
$$	Some direct costs, but under $500 per student
$$$	Major direct costs for teachers, staff, and/or equipment in the range of $500 per student or more

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its first year, the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) has shown promise of its ability to boost reading performance within the targeted "at risk" population of elementary students. Comparisons of pre- and postprogram performance ratings on a developmental checklist indicate positive, statistically significant gains in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills on a programwide basis. *The psychometric properties of this instrument are not known, however, and there is uncertainty about the checklist's reliability.* This finding supports the general consensus of program teachers and staff that the program was successful in its goal of raising students' reading achievement and, it is hoped, will lower their risk of failure and dropping out later.

The program realized somewhat less success in involving students' parents in their children's learning outside the classroom. However, this finding should be viewed with the knowledge that the program can only exercise limited influence on the parents' commitment to their children's education. There are a variety of other determinants that are beyond the control of the program which affect a parent's willingness and ability to participate actively in his or her child's schooling. However, parental involvement could prove to be quite critical in increasing students' chances of academic success and reducing their chances of being at-risk in the future. Therefore, it is imperative that efforts are continued to raise the level of parental involvement.

While the program can be judged to have been generally successful in its first summer (1994), several areas have been identified for improvement. The following are suggestions toward this end:

- *Formulate and adopt a common, grade level-appropriate set of reading standards to be used by all elementary schools in AISD.* To insure that students are identified according to common criteria and standards, and to facilitate meaningful comparisons, a common set of formal diagnostic standards should be used districtwide. Adoption of a common set of standards will better enable District educators to measure progress in student reading achievement at all levels. Because the Accelerating Literacy Program has its basis in the Reading Recovery/Whole Language movement, and because AISD has a number of Reading Recovery-certified teachers, it seems logical that Reading Recovery levels might serve as the foundation for this set of standards. As more and more AISD teachers receive training in the Accelerating Literacy curriculum, such a set of standards will become logical to use districtwide.

- *Formulate and adopt a common method for identifying students who are likely to benefit from participation in the program.* As indicated by the responses to the postprogram questionnaire completed by summer program teachers, nearly all students in the first-year program were identified according to the recommendation of their regular classroom teacher. However, most elementary teachers in AISD have not been trained in ALP methods and many teachers may not be informed about the type of student the program is designed to serve. This situation seems to be apparent from the fact that a number of students received ratings of "4" ("student consistently demonstrates this skill") on the 26-item preprogram developmental checklist. If these ratings are indeed reliable, then one is forced to ponder why these students were recommended for participation. The creation and adoption of formal and systematic diagnostic methods will help to ensure that only those students with the most to gain will be selected to participate in the program.

- *Consider the designation of a permanent coordinator for the Accelerating Literacy Program in AISD.* A provision for a school improvement planner position was included in the original funding proposal, but was later deleted due to budgetary constraints. However, it is recommended that such a position be reconsidered for inclusion in the program. A permanent coordinator would help ensure a more consistent

program from year to year and from campus to campus. Preferably, the coordinator would be trained in Reading Recovery methods and, at the very least, will have received the ALP training. The coordinator might be responsible for organizing and leading a reading standards committee, conducting periodic ALP workshops to train new teachers (K-2), overseeing diagnostic evaluation of students before entry into the program, determining individual and program success through consistent and uniform record-keeping, improving efforts to elevate parental participation, and serving as an interface for other AISD personnel, including the ORE evaluator, TEA staff, parents, and other interested individuals.

- *Continue to offer ALP training for AISD educators.* Training workshops should be offered for new teachers as the ALP grows and develops. If a permanent program coordinator is hired, it would probably not be necessary to contract with an outside consultant each time a workshop is to be conducted. The coordinator might also conduct continuing education for those teachers already trained in the ALP agenda, if such a need is determined to exist.

- *Conduct training workshops on program evaluation techniques.* It is important that all teachers in the ALP understand the importance of the evaluation component to the educational process in general and to the ALP in particular. In view of the various record-keeping problems discussed elsewhere in this report, it is highly recommended that teachers receive some form of training in program evaluation. In order to evaluate program effectiveness reliably over time, it is essential that program documents be maintained in an accurate and consistent manner. The training might be offered in conjunction with the regular ALP workshops discussed above. ORE staff could jointly present this training with the program coordinator.

- *Continue and increase the use of ALP techniques in the regular school-year classroom.* This recommendation will become more feasible as additional teachers receive the ALP training. By adopting the ALP approach to reading instruction, students should become familiar and comfortable with the reading materials, will be able to anticipate what is expected of them, and should continue to experience success in the classroom from year to year. With a consistent program of instruction in place, these students should be able to develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills concurrently.

- *Continue to develop strategies for encouraging parental participation in extracurricular reading activities with their children.* Workshops should continue to be held during the regular school year, at various times during the day and evening to accommodate parents' work schedules. Based on teachers' comments, considerable exertion will probably be required to gain real commitment to attending these workshops. These efforts should include telephone calls to parents from teachers and counselors, as well as printed announcements sent home with students. The workshops should offer a variety of techniques to the parents for working with their children, and should be relatively brief. Also, the Parent-Student Reading Activity Log should continue to be utilized during the regular instructional year. The design of the log should be reviewed and revised as needed. Teachers should use the log as an instrument for tracking parental participation, and as a means for communicating with parents. (The log should be returned to the teacher on a weekly basis. There is an area on the back of the log for teachers and parents to exchange periodic comments about their children's reading activity and progress.) Another idea for consideration is that of a "contract" agreement involving students, parents, and teachers. Such an arrangement would spell out the expectations of the program and the responsibilities of each party toward meeting the program goals.

The findings on which the above recommendations are based are discussed in greater detail in the "Findings" section of this report.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report is intended to serve as an initial basis for an ongoing evaluation of the Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP). The program was first introduced into the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in the spring term of the 1993-94 school year when a selected group of elementary teachers received training in a modified version of Reading Recovery. The first group of students (first graders in the 1993-94 school year) to participate in the program did so in the summer of 1994. The report is also intended to inform and guide decision makers in the District and in the Division of Accelerated Instruction of the Texas Education Agency. The report summarizes program information, rates the effectiveness of the program, suggests possible modifications and improvements for the future, and, it is hoped, will serve as a formative guide and evaluation blueprint as the program progresses into its second year.

In reality, genuine program effectiveness cannot truly be determined for at least several years; that is, the progress of those "at risk" students who chose to participate in the initial program will need to be tracked, assessed, and evaluated during their tenure in AISD schools and compared to that of students not at risk. Therefore, *this report should be viewed from a formative rather than a summative perspective*. The main objectives of the report are to comment on the effectiveness of the Accelerating Literacy Program in addressing the objectives set out in the original proposal, to draw some preliminary conclusions on both the short- and long-term prospects for the future, and to make recommendations for improving the efficacy of the program.

ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Program Justification

The catalyst behind the 1993-94 Accelerating Literacy Program may be found within two official lists: 1) the AISD "C" list (i.e., those four elementary schools with less than 25% of students passing all sections of the spring 1994 Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS)), and 2) TEA's list of schools whose TAAS scores were "clearly unacceptable" (i.e., those nine schools with fewer than 20% of students passing all sections of the TAAS). All schools on these overlapping lists are Chapter 1 schools and serve a largely minority population. Those 13 schools are identified in Figure 1. With the overarching goal of removing the 13 schools from both of these lists, AISD has sought to boost student performance in these schools by identifying low-achieving, "at-risk" students for early and intensive intervention. Though these schools and students are identified on the basis of fourth-grade TAAS scores, it is a commonly held view among professional educators that those low-performing fourth graders have mostly been behind their peers since the beginning of their school careers, and that intervention is required in the lower grades in order to improve test scores in higher grades.

FIGURE 1
AISD ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS INCLUDED ON "C" LIST OR ON TEA'S LIST AS "CLEARLY UNACCEPTABLE"

CAMPUS NAME	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT FAILING TO MEET MINIMUM EXPECTATIONS ON ALL PORTIONS OF TAAS (Spring 1994)*
Allison	56%
Blackshear	69%
Blanton	62%
Govalle	57%
Jordan	79%
Metz	73%
Norman	72%
Oak Springs	59%
Pecan Springs	79%
Ridgetop	9%
Sims	70%
Winn	70%
Wooten	48%

(* Includes all students not in special education.)

In most cases, students were identified for participation in the pilot program on the basis of recommendations by their regular school-year teachers and counselors and, sometimes, on the basis of test scores. The majority of these students are from minority populations and generally come from lower socioeconomic strata. As mentioned in the proposal to the funding agency, many of the students come from backgrounds of poverty and from families with low levels of formal education, and therefore do not begin their school careers as well prepared to learn as other students. In the past, these students might have been retained in first grade. However, AISD has adopted the view in recent years that retention has more negative repercussions than benefits and that retention should only be utilized in the most severe cases. But, in the absence of intervening measures, these same students who otherwise might have been retained start their school careers at a considerable disadvantage and may be passed through the system lacking the foundation necessary for higher levels of learning.

In the absence of intervening measures, these students will fall further and further behind their peers in classroom achievement over the course of years. As the gap widens, the likelihood of these students remaining in school and successfully completing their public school careers as high school graduates diminishes each year. That is, the students' probability of becoming "at risk" of dropping out increases as a function of an ever-widening achievement gap. Most educators are in agreement that the key to reducing the dropout rate lies in identifying those students as early as possible and placing them in intensively focused intervention programs.

Funding the Program

In response to a request for proposals (RFP) issued by the Division of Accelerated Instruction of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), AISD submitted a proposal for funding the Accelerating Literacy Program in December 1993. *The RFP constituted an invitation to apply for grant monies to be used to develop innovative programs to reduce grade-level retention.* AISD submitted an application seeking a grant for $298,132 to fund the program for the 1993-94 school year. The application was approved by TEA and AISD received funds from the Retention Reduction Grants Program in the amount of $223,599 on April 27, 1994. The first-year budget is detailed in Figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2
BUDGET FOR
1993-94 ACCELERATING LITERACY PROGRAM

Class/Object Description	Budget
Payroll Costs	$126,342
Professional & Contracted Services	16,165
Supplies & Materials	77,577
Other Operating Expenses	3,515
Total Direct Costs	**$223,599**

Because the funds were awarded late in the regular school year, a decision was made to structure the Accelerating Literacy Program as a half-day summer program (in anticipation of an extended school year in 1994-95) rather than as an after-school or special program during the regular school year. With the exception of two campuses, all schools began a four-week program of half-day instruction on June 6, 1994 with the anticipation of serving approximately 480 AISD students.

Selection of the Accelerating Literacy Program

Recognizing that the ability to read well is essential to success in all other subject areas, several administrators within the 13 program schools and the District central office researched programs designed to deliver concentrated reading instruction to the targeted group of "at risk" first graders. With an eye toward either an extended school day and/or school year, these educators, through the Region XIII Education Service Center, identified a workshop program offered by Educational Consultant Services (ECS) of Imperial Beach, California. ECS's in-service course had grown out of experiments in reading intervention in the South Bay (CA) Union School District, a district demographically similar to AISD, and with similar difficulties in reading achievement within "at risk" populations. Furthermore, the mechanics of the program resembled those of certain intervention procedures used at AISD's Ortega Elementary School, a school that at one time experienced similar problems but which has staged a significant turnaround in TAAS scores.

Working with South Bay Union School District personnel, ECS created the Accelerating Literacy Program, a reading curriculum characterized by intensive reading instruction, with roots in the Reading Recovery/Whole Language Programs developed by New Zealand educator, Dr. Marie Clay. (According, to the training material provided by ECS, New Zealand has the highest literacy rate in the world.) *The Accelerating Literacy Program varies from the Reading Recovery model in that it is adapted for small class settings, usually six to eight students, rather than one-to-one instruction.* The Accelerating Literacy Program is characterized by the following:

- *Early Intervention,*
- *Short-Term, Intense Help,*
- *Building on Strengths,*
- *Focus on How-To,*
- *Action Oriented,*
- *Accelerated Progress,*
- *Reading/Writing Connection,*
- *Focus on Meaning,*
- *Sound-Letter Relationships,*
- *Flexibility, and*
- *Staff Development.*

In April 1994, trainers from ECS conducted a three-day, 15-hour workshop on the Accelerating Literacy Program curriculum for AISD teachers and administrators, most of whom participated in the 1994 summer program. Release time was paid to participating personnel. Among the main features of the program were lesson planning, diagnosis of particular problems by charting running records, miscue analysis training, and information on books and materials. A second 15-hour workshop was conducted by a consultant from ECS on June 20-21, 1994 for a group of kindergarten and second-grade teachers who will be utilizing some of the ALP techniques in their regular classrooms during the 1994-95 school year. A brief questionnaire, developed by ORE, was given at the conclusion of the second workshop. Responses to the questionnaire reflected general satisfaction with and enthusiasm for the program. The only negative comments concerned the length of the instructional day, an indication that a few teachers felt the breadth of material to be covered was perhaps somewhat too ambitious for a two-day workshop.

The strategy of using these techniques in sequential grades (K-2) is intended to help ensure continuity in student learning by offering students a variety of consistent techniques by offering low-achieving students an opportunity to experience successes built upon proven learning strategies, thus laying a more solid foundation for learning in all subjects.

In considering possible solutions to the problem of low reading achievement, AISD educators also identified an important resource to supplement the ALP curriculum: parental participation and involvement in their children's reading education. It is well established that close parental participation in the education of young children is a strong determinant of early success in school. As District educators planned the first year of the Accelerating Literacy Program, they began to identify methods for actively involving parents in the program. A series of summer workshops was planned to educate parents on strategies and activities for developing and furthering their children's reading education at home. In addition, a Parent-Student Daily Reading Activity Log was developed by the evaluation consultant and sent home with all students on the first day of instruction in the hope of encouraging parents to partake in reading activities with their children.

Population Served

Student demographic information, taken from District records, is shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3
ALP STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

SEX	PERCENT
Male	48.4%
Female	51.6%
ETHNICITY	**PERCENT**
Hispanic	52.8%
African American	43.8%
White (not of Hispanic origin)	3.2%
Other	0.2%

Outlook for Continuation of the Program

The summer 1994 program was designed to serve as a pilot project, with the idea of continuing instruction either in the regular school year or during the summer segment of the extended school year. As this report goes to print, it has been learned that funds to continue the ALP program in the 1994-95 school year have been procured, but it is not yet clear what form the program will take. Though it is anticipated that some of the techniques of the ALP program will be used in classrooms during the regular school year, the ALP will probably continue primarily as a summer program.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Accelerating Literacy Program (ALP) as developed by Evaluation Consultant Services (ECS) was chosen for implementation in the summer session because of its reported success in a comparable environment (i.e., the South Bay (CA) Union School District). The curriculum is flexible enough that it can be used as a stand-alone program (such as the summer program) or as an adjunct to regular school year reading instruction. According to information in the teacher training manual, the curriculum is considerate of different learning styles, cultures, and language.

The thematic principle upon which the program operates is that of integrating reading, writing, listening and speaking activities into a whole language approach to instruction. The program seeks to "accelerate" the learning process by building on students' successes. According to the theory of the program, when a teacher determines that a student has mastered text at a given level, the teacher should immediately challenge the student at a higher level; this is the principle underlying the name of the program. According to the ALP instruction manual, this objective is pursued through the following steps:

- Evaluating the reading process through miscue analysis;
- Applying the four types of reading (discussed below) in whole language instruction;
- Using effective questioning strategies in guided process reading;
- Assessing and monitoring reading and writing behaviors; and
- Using predicting/confirming activities and mapping techniques that clarify thinking.

Teachers received training in four modes of reading instruction: 1) Read Aloud, 2) Shared Reading, 3) Guided Process Reading, and 4) Silent Sustained Reading. In addition, two types of writing were covered: 1) Modeled Writing, and 2) Student Writing. The program also included generation of ideas in lesson planning, cuing systems, prediction and confirmation strategies, diagnosis of particular problems by charting running records, miscue analysis training, program organization and management, and information on procurement of suggested texts and materials. A workshop program outline may be found in the technical report.

A few schools were fortunate enough to have at least one teacher who had received training in Reading Recovery, in which the Accelerating Literacy Program is grounded. However, most of the summer program teachers worked at the same campuses where they were employed during the regular school year, and many were quite familiar with the students in the summer program, their learning styles, and individual learning difficulties. Indeed, in many cases the teacher who recommended a student for the summer program was the same teacher in whose classroom the student spent his or her summer.

While all teachers received a common training and had the same tools and techniques at their command, they were given considerable latitude in structuring their classroom programs. Most teachers spent the first few days of the program establishing baseline ratings (i.e., running records and developmental checklist ratings) for their students, though many were already familiar with their students' strengths and weaknesses since they had been in their classrooms during the previous school year. Through early use of the

developmental checklist, running record, and miscue analyses (and given their familiarity with their students), teachers were able to identify areas of weakness in individual students' reading abilities and to design a learning strategy for each student.

Though there were varying degrees of coordination between classrooms in each school, the program allowed each teacher to structure a program appropriate to the needs of his/her students. Teachers were encouraged to integrate a variety of reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities as the whole language philosophy dictates, with a focus on helping students develop self-monitoring, self-correcting strategies in their approach to reading.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

AISD's Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) was assigned responsibility for the required evaluation component of the program, a condition of the grant. An evaluation consultant, reporting to ORE's senior evaluator, was contracted to undertake all tasks related to the design and execution of the evaluation. The consultant's major tasks as identified in the proposal were:

- To refine the basic evaluation design and questions as set forth in the proposal;
- To develop and refine measures of student progress and performance;
- To provide training to teachers in evaluation and data collection processes;
- To design and create a longitudinal database containing both demographic and student performance information for the purpose of tracking reading achievement progress over time;
- To serve as liaison to the Texas Education Agency in its study of the impact of retention reduction programs in improving student achievement and lowering retention rates; and
- To author a formative evaluation report at the conclusion of the summer program.

It should be noted that the structure of the program changed in several important ways after the proposal was submitted. The program was not actually funded until April 27, 1994. Partly for this reason, the program was scaled back from the regular school year calendar to a summer program. The evaluation consultant was brought aboard May 18. Summer classroom instruction began Monday, June 6, allowing little time for the evaluation consultant to conduct teacher training on the evaluation and data collection processes. Most of the intervening period was spent familiarizing the consultant with the Accelerating Literacy Program, in planning the evaluation effort, and in designing and creating instruments and instructions for data collection.

Revision of Program Objectives and Evaluation Questions

In the proposal submitted to the funding agency, four major program objectives were defined:

1. All students who participate in the Accelerating Literacy Program will avoid the need to be retained;
2. Students will have a stronger foundation for second grade, as shown by at least a four-level gain on the diagnostic running record in reading;
3. Parents will become partners in the educational process as shown by their participation in workshops which stress home teaching strategies and the development of homemade materials and learning activities; and
4. A school improvement planner will continue to expand literacy intervention efforts in these schools.

Since the District in recent years has adopted promotion policies aimed at discouraging grade-level retention, the first objective is largely moot. In information gathered in interviews and questionnaires, virtually all summer program teachers and principals indicated that *few, if any, of the students selected to participate in the summer program would have been held back in order to repeat their first-grade year.*

The school improvement planner position mentioned in the fourth objective and originally included in the proposal to TEA was deleted from the program strategy, at least for the summer program. Thus, no effort was directed toward evaluation of that goal, though a discussion of the future of that position is included elsewhere within this report.

With the elimination of objectives one and four from the summer program, evaluation efforts were concentrated around the second and third objectives. The evaluation consultant's approach to the second objective had to be somewhat revised when it was discovered that no common scale or standard of reading achievement was being employed on a districtwide basis. Some teachers in the program used reading levels defined by the publisher whose texts they were using in the classroom. Among publishers, there is considerable variation in definitions of reading levels. Other schools, especially those with Reading Recovery-trained teachers, used Reading Recovery levels to determine student progress. *Lack of a commonly used standard therefore presented a considerable obstacle when attempting to assess programwide gains in reading proficiency.* To determine the impact of the reading intervention methods on program students and to gauge the extent of parental involvement in their childrens' reading education, several evaluation instruments were either adopted from external sources with modification or else were created by the evaluation consultant. Those measurement instruments are explained in the following section.

In attempting to judge the effectiveness of the summer program in meeting the goals outlined in the grant proposal and in the objectives of the Accelerating Literacy Program, in view of the circumstances discussed above, the basic set of evaluation questions was revised as shown below:

1. Did the Accelerating Literacy Program result in an overall increase in student reading levels? If so, by what criteria and measures? Were reading levels raised sufficiently that students are at comparable levels of reading achievement with their nonprogram peers? Apart from reading achievement, did the program positively impact the students? Their parents? The school faculty?

2. What was the cost-effectiveness of the program? Did the average incremental increase in reading levels justify the costs of the program?

3. Did the program successfully involve the parents in the intervention effort? Did it improve parents' willingness to participate in their children's education?

4. Will the program need to be continued during the regular school year in order for these students to be able to keep pace with their classmates? If so, how should the program be structured during the regular school year?

5. How did program instruction vary from classroom to classroom? From school to school? Did the variation produce different results?

Information Sources

Several sources for determining program success in strengthening students' reading foundations were used:

- The Accelerating Literacy Summer Program Developmental Checklist;
- The Summary of Running Record;
- The Accelerating Literacy Summer Program Class Attendance Record;
- End of Summer Program Teacher and Principal Questionnaires;
- Teachers' anecdotal records; and
- Informal interviews with program staff.

Two measures were used in determining the success of the program in involving parents in their children's reading instruction:

- Parent-Student Reading Activity Log; and
- Informal discussion with program staff.

These measures are discussed in detail in the following section.

Indicators of Program Effectiveness

At the beginning of the summer program, all teachers were issued a packet of forms and instructions developed by the evaluation consultant. Though none of the students were mandated to attend this summer program, teachers were nevertheless instructed to keep a *class attendance record*. To measure progress in reading skills, teachers were asked to rate every student in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking using a list of 26 learning indicators on a *pre- and postprogram developmental checklist*. A more detailed measure of reading progress was the *running record*. Teachers were asked to use the running record with their students to identify consistent error patterns and to isolate particular difficulties. In a running record, teachers would copy a short text from a student reader onto a record sheet. The student was then asked to read from the reader. The teacher checked each word identified correctly, would mark words identified erroneously, and also words which were initially misidentified but which the student was able to correct by him/herself. When the student finished, the teacher was asked to calculate an accuracy rate and self-correction rate for the student. Each teacher was directed to construct a minimum of two running records per student during the four-week period, and to videotape the charting of beginning and ending running records for at least one student.

Teachers were supplied with the following forms for recordkeeping and data collection:

Classroom attendance record forms were used as indicators of student participation. Teachers were instructed to record the number of hours each student was present for class each day. The attendance form was presented as a simple chart, and most teachers were able to use it to record attendance information reliably.

The *pre- and postprogram developmental checklist* was designed to assess learning progress. Teachers were asked to use a four-part scale in rating each child on writing (nine indicators), reading (nine indicators), and listening/speaking skills (eight indicators). For the purposes of analyzing differences in pre- and postprogram performance, the scale was converted from a text to numeric format, where:

1 = Not Yet (The student is *not yet* demonstrating this skill.)

2 = Occasionally (The student *occasionally* demonstrates this skill.)

3 = Most of the Time (The student demonstrates this skill *most of the time*.)

4 = Consistently (The student *consistently* demonstrates this skill.)

For those cases in which there was no information on which to base a rating, or if the teacher chose not to rate students on a particular skill, or where interpreting a rating was uncertain or ambiguous (e.g., the teacher checked more than one rating per skill area, or placed her mark halfway between cells), the respective table cell was left blank.

Teachers seemed to have few difficulties utilizing the developmental checklist. The form is clearly and logically organized, simple to use, and allows for an easy understanding and comparability of summary performance data. (The checklist was also translated into Spanish at the request of teachers at one campus.) Ratings of 26 indicators (nine each in Reading and Writing, eight in Listening/Speaking) were used to measure change in reading development over the course of the program. Ratings for all skills within each category were equally weighted. Means were calculated for each skill and each category.

The running record form was intended to be used as a more precise indicator of improvement in reading accuracy and self-correction abilities; it was to have been an important diagnostic tool for this program. The form is designed so that the teacher transfers text from short passages onto the form, then charts the student's reading performance on a word-by-word basis. The teacher checks off each word correctly identified and pronounced by the student and marks and notes the type of each miscue. After the exercise is finished, the teacher records the total number of "running words" in the text and total miscues or errors committed by the student, then calculates the accuracy rate (*Accuracy Rate = Number of Correct Words/Total Running Words*). Teachers are also asked to calculate the student's self-correction rate (*Self-Corrected Errors/Total Errors*) and to rate the text categorically (i.e., Easy, Instructional, or Hard). Teachers were asked to chart at least two running records per student during the program, in order to facilitate analysis of program effectiveness. Except in those cases where students dropped out of the program early, most teachers complied with this request. Indeed, it was found in many cases that teachers charted four, six, eight, or more running records for their students, indicating a certain enthusiasm for the technique and a belief in the information which can be derived from it.

The *Parent-Student Reading Activity Log* was designed as the primary instrument for determining the level of parental participation in reading-related activities with their children. Parents were asked to describe reading-related activities shared with their children (e.g., listening to their child read aloud, sharing in the identification of "environmental print" (e.g., signs), trips to the public library, etc.) outside the classroom and to record the amount of time spent each day in those activities. Most parents who chose to use the log seemed to have had little difficulty in doing so.

A secondary goal of the summer program was the creation of *student performance portfolios*. With increasing attention in educational circles to so-called "authentic" assessment in the last several years, it was felt that the establishment of a new program in such an early grade afforded the District an excellent opportunity to begin building student portfolios which can follow students through their careers in the public schools. Teachers in the ALP summer session were asked to construct student folders containing copies of all of the previously discussed documents, as well as the teacher's anecdotal notes on classroom observation, student writing samples, and other records which the teacher deemed relevant to the program.

During the last week of the program, *teacher and principal program questionnaires* were distributed. Teachers were asked only to identify themselves by their campus, but not by name, so relative anonymity was insured. Forty-five of the 55 teachers (82%) returned completed forms. A synopsis of teachers' responses is included in the technical report, but the essence of the questionnaire was to determine how the teachers felt about the effectiveness of the program.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Participation

Finding

An examination of class attendance logs revealed a variety of patterns and problems with student attendance at nearly every campus. Summary attendance data by campus is shown in Figure 4. Across the 13 campuses, students were present only 86% of possible hours, on average. Many students who were enrolled in the program never reported for class (48 of 415 students, or 11.5% of total program enrollment). There were a number of variations in attendance patterns, according to class attendance records. For example, some students enrolled in the program attended the first week, were absent the following week or two, then returned for the final few days of the program. In a few cases, students did not report to their campuses until the second or third week of the program. Many more students formally withdrew or else dropped out without notification before the end of the program, despite efforts by teachers and administrators to contact their parents.

FIGURE 4
REPORTED ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE, BY CAMPUS, SUMMER 1994

CAMPUS	Number of Students Enrolled	Number of Students Reporting In First Week	Weighted Mean Percentages of Total Hours Attended*
Allison	26	26	69%
Blackshear	28	28	82%
Blanton	30	29	95%
Govalle	83	53	70%
Jordan	30	30	71%
Metz	38	35	88%
Norman	23	22	76%
Oak Springs	25	21	81%
Pecan Springs	28	22	73%
Ridgetop	17	17	78%
Sims	26	24	68%
Winn	37	36	84%
Wooten	24	24	78%
Program Total	415	367	86%

* Mean percentages include those students who reported for class in the first week, but later withdrew or dropped out. Percentages do not include those students who were enrolled but never reported for class.

Recommendation

Because participation in the program is entirely voluntary, and because students were not retained for failing to attend, it is probably realistic to expect similar attendance patterns in the future. If continued as a summer program, it will be important to develop ideas for improving attendance further. Schools might give consideration to an informal "contract" arrangement between parents, students, and teachers which would spell out the intentions, goals, and expectations of the summer program, and the responsibilities of each party toward meeting those goals. Wording of the contract should include references to student attendance expectations and to parents' commitment to attend the parent training workshops and to spend time with their children in reading-related activities (see discussion following). However, program staff will need to continue to make follow-up contact with parents to explain the importance of the program to their childrens' academic future and the more immediate need for their children to attend.

Parental Participation

Finding

Utilization of the Parent-Student Reading Activity Log was highly variable. Many parents were quite diligent in reporting daily reading activities; some of the logs reflect dozens of hours of shared activities. However, many portfolios contained no logs whatsoever. Several plausible explanations exist: 1) parents shared reading-related activities with the students and maintained daily entries but failed to return the log at the conclusion of the program; 2) parents shared reading-related activities with the students, but did not maintain a daily log; or 3) parents did not engage in activities with their children and therefore did not keep a log. While it is possible that some of the logs may have been maintained but misplaced or not returned at the end of the program, it seems evident from the number of missing logs that many parents either worked with their children but did not maintain a record of their activities, or did not engage in any extracurricular reading activities with their children. Twenty-six of the 42 teachers (62%) completing the postprogram questionnaire also answered "no" when asked whether parents of their students were regularly maintaining and returning the reading activity log. Figure 5 summarizes mean total minutes of shared reading activities for each campus in the program.

For those parents who maintained one, the log apparently was easy to use since most entries were easily interpretable. A few parents seemed to have misunderstood the purpose of the log, recording all extracurricular activities in which the student participated, e.g., swimming, television viewing, etc.

FIGURE 5
MEAN REPORTED TOTAL MINUTES SPENT IN PARENT-STUDENT READING ACTIVITIES, BY CAMPUS

CAMPUS	Number of Student Portfolios Containing Logs with Entries	Mean Total* Minutes Spent in Parent-Student Reading Activities
Allison	9	239
Blackshear	4	309
Blanton	6	86
Govalle	0	NR
Jordan	11	330
Metz	25	345
Norman	0	NR
Oak Springs	1	85
Pecan Springs	2	313
Ridgetop	15	237
Sims	1	15
Winn	2	55
Wooten	8	248
Program Total	**84**	**269**

NR = No Records

* Program mean was calculated by weighting each school's mean total minutes by the respective number of portfolios submitted by each school. Those weighted means were added, then divided by the total number of student portfolios for the program.

The parent-training workshops were not as well-attended as had been anticipated. Despite the fact that workshops were often offered at a variety of times (both day and evening) and dates, and despite efforts by program staff to contact parents, overall participation was poor. Although a few campuses reported good attendance at their workshops, they seem to have been exceptions to the general trend. Though workshop sign-in sheets were not submitted as part of the evaluation process, a majority of teachers (25 of 42; 59%) responding to the end-of-program questionnaire answered "no" when asked whether parents of most of their students had attended any workshop. A majority of those teachers responding to the questionnaire indicated

that most parents of their students had not attended the parent training workshops (25 of 45; 56%) and that most parents had not maintained the Parent-Student Reading Activity Log (26 of 45; 58%). Though the majority of teachers reported low parental participation, most asserted an observable correlation between levels of parent-student interaction and increases in reading achievement (29 of 45; 64%). These responses generally corroborate the evaluation findings.

Recommendation

Though the program was successful in raising reading achievement levels (see discussion in the following section) despite uneven levels of parental participation, it will be important to continue efforts to involve parents in their children's early education and to make them aware of their potential to make a critical difference in their children's future. Provided that funds are available, program schools should consider offering periodic parent training workshops throughout the regular school year. Reasonable efforts should be made to accommodate the work schedules of busy parents; in order to involve the greatest possible number of parents (and to save the costs of duplicated efforts), workshops might be held at rotating sites in the evening as well as on the occasional Saturday.

It will be important to gain the commitment of the parents to participate in the workshops. In addition to the "contract" agreement discussed above, teachers and counselors (and parent training specialists, if they are funded) will probably need to do extensive telephone work. Another suggestion for gaining commitment is to send notices and sign-up forms home with students. The workshop announcement would list the time, date, and location of each workshop. The sign-up form would request parents to indicate whether or not they planned to attend the workshop, and to return the form in either case. If parents are compelled to indicate their intentions, it seems more likely that they will pledge themselves to attending the workshops. Reminder notices could be sent home with students a day or two before the workshops are held.

Though some revisions may be required, the Parent-Student Reading Activity Log should continue to be used to monitor parental involvement. (In fact, there is no reason to limit use of the log strictly to program students, or to restrict its use only to the summer session.) During the parent training workshops, parents should receive training on the purpose of and procedure for maintaining the log. It will be important that teachers review students' logs on a regular basis, and make efforts to contact parents who are not utilizing the log.

Progress in Reading Achievement

Finding

Analysis of the developmental checklist indicator ratings shows that, **programwide, students participating in the summer Accelerating Literacy Program gained an average 0.47 levels (preprogram mean rating = 3.03; postprogram mean rating = 3.50) on their overall reading skills (based on a four-point scale, where a "4" is the highest possible rating).** The difference in pre- and postprogram mean reading ratings was found to be statistically significant. Detailed information concerning calculation of the *t* statistics may be found in the technical report.

This finding supports the belief asserted by teachers in the postprogram questionnaire that the program had had a positive effect on most of their students. It is important to note, however, that *some teachers apparently viewed the program more as a maintenance effort than as a means for "accelerating" the learning process.* Others felt the program had helped boost reading achievement among most of their

students, but had not met the goal of bringing the students up to level with their nonprogram peers. A minority of teachers (16 of 42; 38%) responding to the questionnaire stated that they felt the program had been effective to the point that most of their students were performing at the same level as their nonprogram peers. Several teachers qualified their remarks, commenting that if the program dates had been extended, or had the instructional days been longer, that their students might have eventually caught up.

In response to the question on the postprogram questionnaire, *"Given the current pace, do you believe your students will be reading on the same level in the fall as those first graders who were not identified for participation in the Accelerating Literacy Program?"* the teachers were nearly evenly divided (*"Yes"* = 16, *"No"* = 18, *"Other"* = 8). Among those teachers responding "no," most indicated that they still felt the program had value. Many commented that if they had had more time to work with the students (i.e., a longer school day or more program days) that their students might have improved to the level of their nonprogram peers. Others stated that if some of the students were not performing at the same level as their peers, it was probably due more to the fact of sporadic attendance than that the program was ineffective. A few teachers commented that they viewed the program more as a "maintenance" measure; that is, they felt the program helped low-performing students sustain whatever reading level they had attained by the end of first grade, preventing them from backsliding over the summer months but not advancing their skills.

Recommendation

For those teachers who taught in the summer 1994 program and who will continue to do so in the future, it should be emphasized that the agenda of the program is not intended to serve as a mere "maintenance effort." Rather, as the name implies, it is to accelerate the development of the reading skills in at-risk students as swiftly as possible to bring those students to age-appropriate levels of reading competency. Likewise, it is important that this program philosophy is firmly imparted when new teachers undergo the ALP training. It is central to the philosophy of the program for teachers to challenge their students continually with increasingly difficult materials.

Finding

As discussed in the "Evaluation Overview," the second of four major program objectives stated in the RFP was:

> "Students will have a stronger foundation for second grade, as shown by at least a four-level gain on the diagnostic running record in reading."

In the planning of the ALP program, it was assumed that the student diagnostic running record, besides being an important diagnostic tool for classroom use, would also serve as an important measurement instrument for judging the level of overall program success. **However, a number of serious problems developed with the use of this form. The problems were so numerous and varied that they rendered this record virtually useless for determining overall program gains in student reading achievement during the summer program.** Perhaps the teachers did not receive thorough or uniform training in marking and calculating the running record, or perhaps a set of instructions should have been included with the form provided by the evaluation consultant.

There was considerable variation in the methods by which the running records were kept. Some teachers used forms which were different from those provided with the packet of evaluation materials, and, in a few cases, more than one type of form (other than the one provided at the beginning of the program) was used

to evaluate a single student. Often, teachers failed to mark records in a manner interpretable to the evaluation consultant. Quite frequently, running words, errors, accuracy ratios, and self-correction rates were either partially or completely absent, or calculated incorrectly. Sometimes, it was clear that the teacher had charted the text, but had neglected to follow through with calculations of summary rates. In many cases, it was evident that the formulas required to calculate accuracy and self-correction rates were used incorrectly. Another common problem was that some teachers neglected to note the date that records were taken, thus making it practically impossible to compare early performances to later ones. The difficulty level of the text was sometimes not indicated. It was especially puzzling in some cases that teachers often submitted an initial running record showing a high accuracy rate on a text rated as "easy," followed by a final record with a high accuracy rate on a text of equal difficulty. By not challenging the student with a higher level of text, the teacher forced the student to work under a very low performance ceiling; that is, unless the student was moved to a higher level of difficulty, there was little room to demonstrate improvement (i.e., restriction of range). It is especially necessary to allow for ample "elbow room" when only two running records are included in the portfolio. The converse is also true. When a running record reflects difficulty with text at a certain level, the next running record should probably be taken at a lower level of difficulty. Some teachers seemed to have a clear understanding of the application of this concept; however, many more did not. *The reliability of the data taken from the running records is suspect to the point that it was determined that those records were of little use in gauging gains on a student, classroom, school, or program level.*

Recommendation

The running record, when employed correctly, can constitute a valuable source of data both as an indicator of individual student progress as well as for program evaluation. Efforts to use it as part of an ongoing evaluation process should not be abandoned simply because of the difficulties encountered in the pilot phase of the program. However, it is suggested that teachers should receive further instruction in the use of the running record and on the importance of producing uniform, reliable, comparable, and comprehensible records.

In the course of gathering information for the evaluation, it was discovered that no common set of reading proficiency standards was being employed on a programwide basis. Most teachers reported that they were using reading levels as defined by the publisher whose texts they were using in their summer class, and some reported using texts from more than one publisher. A few teachers also reported using Reading Recovery-based levels.

Such a profusion of differently defined reading levels makes any attempt to compare student progress across classrooms or schools both difficult and unreliable. Though individual teachers are probably able to assess each student's progress quite accurately using a chosen scale, the lack of a uniform standard makes the assessment of programwide progress a difficult task.

Since the Accelerating Literacy Program is grounded in Reading Recovery methods, it seems appropriate that Reading Recovery levels be used as a common standard on a programwide basis. Several campuses were fortunate enough to have certified Reading Recovery teachers in the summer program. It is suggested that all teachers participating in the next summer program receive instruction on Reading Recovery levels before the beginning of the program, using one or more of these teachers as a presenter. If the ALP workshop is held again before the next summer program, the program agenda should be amended to include instruction on Reading Recovery levels.

Depending on the budget for next year's program, either a Reading Recovery-trained teacher or a program coordinator (who might be the same person) could be assigned as a "roving observer" who would assist other teachers in charting running records using Reading Recovery techniques. Such a measure would tend to insure that student reading achievement is meaningfully comparable across campuses.

Finding

In the same vein as the finding discussed above, it was also discovered that **students were not placed in the program by any common, systematic criteria**. According to the majority of responses to the teacher questionnaire, nearly all students were elected to the program by teacher recommendation. However, few of the respondents indicated the basis for making their recommendations, though several mentioned that they did so based on test results; however, none of those teachers named a specific test. Possibly as a result, it seems that a number of students may have been enrolled unnecessarily, if the student developmental checklist is a reliable, valid, age-appropriate instrument. A review of the completed checklists at the conclusion of the program indicates that *a large number of students had received high ratings (i.e., "3's" and "4's") in most or all skills categories at the beginning of the program*. Such a finding suggests that these may not be the students for whom the program was intended, or else that the checklist is not an adequate instrument for the task.

Recommendation

On the assumption that the skills categories on the developmental checklist are valid, that ratings of individual pupils are reliable, and that the checklist is an age-appropriate measure, it is suggested that an additional measure be used to screen students before acceptance into the program. Because some of the teachers making recommendations may not have received the ALP training and, therefore, may not understand which students the program is designed to serve, it is recommended that all students who are initially nominated for the program receive a preprogram diagnostic screening from a program-trained or Reading Recovery-trained teacher.

For this suggestion to work effectively, however, there must be consensus on the level of need for placement of students in the program. Therefore, it is recommended that a committee be formed, composed of Reading Recovery teachers, teacher representatives from program campuses, and administrators, and, possibly, a permanent program coordinator, whose tasks would include, but would not be limited to:

1) Defining threshold proficiency levels for entry into the program;

2) Defining uniform reading levels for use across the program;

3) Modifying or creating measurement instruments, such as the running record form, which can properly measure reading performance levels;

4) Working with the evaluator to determine periodically the direction and progress of the program; and

5) Developing and conducting continuing education activities for program personnel and District educators.

Cost-Effect and Cost per Contact Hour

Finding

One method for evaluating the effectiveness of the program is to consider the cost at which any net gain (or loss) is achieved. Much like unit pricing in a supermarket aisle, a cost-effect ratio informs us not only of the effectiveness of the program, but also of its efficiency. The cost-effect ratio is simply the calculation of total program cost divided by the mean gain (or mean loss) in reading achievement level, *presuming that the gain is attributable to the program.* In general, it is necessary to establish that the effect of a special program on student achievement is above and beyond the effect resulting from the students' regular instructional program, as well as from other factors such as educational experiences outside school and normal maturation. Because the ALP was a summer program, *it will be assumed for the purposes of this calculation that the observed gains in reading achievement were the result of the ALP and not of other instructional influences.* The cost-effect ratio is expressed as:

$$\text{Cost-Effect} = \frac{\text{Total program budget}}{\text{Mean gain/loss in reading achievement levels}} = \frac{\$223,599}{0.47} = \$47,574$$

Another measure of program economy is to consider the number of students served and the amount of classroom contact time created per budget dollar. By dividing total program costs (i.e., the program budget or the one-year grant amount) by the number of total student-hours recorded by teachers (i.e., the sum total of classroom time for all students in the program, based on a four-hour instructional day), cost per contact hour can be derived. Thus, cost per contact hour for the 1993-94 summer program was calculated as:

$$\text{Cost per contact hour} = \frac{\text{Total program budget}}{\text{Total contact hours}} = \frac{\$223,599}{23,520} = \$9.50 \text{ per contact hour}$$

Recommendation

Cost per contact hour can be reduced in two ways: 1) by reducing the program budget while maintaining total contact hours; or 2) by improving attendance and lowering the program dropout rate if the budget remains a constant. Assuming that the first option is the least desirable, emphasis should be placed on increasing total student-hours by implementing the measures discussed in earlier sections of this report.

Likewise, there are basically two methods for improving the cost-effect ratio. The first is to reduce the budget (cost) while maintaining improvements in reading achievement (effect). The other option is to hold costs steady while raising the rate of improvement in reading achievement. Again, it is assumed that the first option is undesirable. Therefore, the default option is to continue to improve the achievement gain. Perhaps the most immediate way to raise this effect is to improve ways of identifying the students who will benefit the most from the program. As discussed in an earlier section, there were a number of students who received high ratings in most of the skills areas at the beginning of the program. These students had little room for improved ratings; therefore, the possibilities for a large effect are limited for those students. As more students working under a low ceiling are placed in the program, the total effect for the program diminishes proportionally. By removing those students who are least likely to benefit from the program, the possibility for a larger effect is increased. Reducing enrollment and class size, of course, will allow program teachers more time to spend with those students who are most in need of the benefits the program can deliver. (However, reducing student enrollment will have the concurrent effect of reducing the number of student contact hours, thereby raising the cost-per-contact-hour ratio.)

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